



# MAGIC VALLEY

BLAINE, CAMAS, CASSIA, GOODING, JEROME, LINCOLN, MINIDOKA, & TWIN FALLS COUNTIES

## EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for The Magic Valley Labor Market area was 4.2 percent for February 2002, a reduction of one-tenth of a percentage point from February 2001 as shown on Magic Valley Table 1. The reduction of two-tenths of a percentage point from January 2002 to February 2002 is a good indicator that the South Central Idaho economy is remaining relative strong and steady and that diversification efforts in Economic Development are paying off.

Overall, *Nonfarm Payroll Jobs* showed a 2.3 percent increase since last year primarily upon the strength of *Service-Producing Industries*, which rose 3.7 percent. That increase was heavily influenced by *Services*, which rose 17.5 percent over the year. South Central Idaho has a high concentration of temporary worker agencies, and there has been a large increase in this sector as businesses have relied on temporary workers to round out their work forces. *Mining & Construction* are down from the past couple of years because inclement weather halted numerous construction projects. However, with a large jump in new housing starts, *Construction* is expected to be robust when the weather clears.

An area of great concern is the 5.2 percent reduction in *Government-Education*. The 2002 Legislature has passed a very austere budget since state government is facing serious revenue shortfalls and most major school districts, as well as the College of Southern Idaho, may have to seriously trim back staffs. The loss of these stable, good-paying jobs most likely will have a detrimental effect on the economy of South Central Idaho. Overall, however, the South Central economy is weathering the present recession well, and now that national economists are predicting an end to the recession, South Central Idaho is set to be a state leader in eco-

Magic Valley Table 1: Labor Force & Employment  
Twin Falls, Jerome, and Gooding counties

	Feb 2002*	Jan 2002	Feb 2001	% Change From	
				Last Month	Last Year
INDIVIDUALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE					
<b>Seasonally Adjusted</b>					
Civilian Labor Force	51,490	51,930	49,450	-0.8	4.1
Unemployment	2,180	2,270	2,040	-4.0	6.9
% of Labor Force Unemployed	4.2	4.4	4.1		
Total Employment	49,310	49,660	47,410	-0.7	4.0
<b>Unadjusted</b>					
Civilian Labor Force	49,680	50,070	47,750		4.0
Unemployment	2,600	2,700	2,520	-3.7	3.2
% of Labor Force Unemployed	5.2	5.4	5.3		
Total Employment	47,080	47,370	45,230	-0.6	4.1
JOBS BY PLACE OF WORK					
<b>Nonfarm Payroll Jobs**</b>					
<b>Goods-Producing Industries</b>	6,440	6,460	6,710	-0.3	-4.0
Mining & Construction	1,520	1,570	1,570	-3.2	-3.2
Manufacturing	4,920	4,890	5,140	0.6	-4.3
Durable Goods	840	840	900	0.0	-6.7
Nondurable Goods	4,080	4,050	4,240	0.7	-3.8
Food Processing	3,090	3,070	3,190	0.7	-3.1
All Other Nondurable Goods	990	980	1,050	1.0	-5.7
<b>Service-Producing Industries</b>	31,530	31,830	30,400	-0.9	3.7
Transportation, Comm., & Utilities	2,630	2,660	2,590	-1.1	1.5
Wholesale Trade	2,210	2,200	2,290	0.5	-3.5
Retail Trade	7,810	7,850	7,910	-0.5	-1.3
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	1,290	1,300	1,360	-0.8	-5.1
Services	10,130	10,570	8,620	-4.2	17.5
Government Administration	3,780	3,740	3,750	1.1	0.8
Government Education	3,680	3,710	3,880	-0.8	-5.2

\*Preliminary Estimate

\*\*Full- or part-time jobs of people who worked for or received wages in the pay period including the 12th of the month

nomie growth and diversification, and an example of well coordinated and useful economic development.

## AREA DEVELOPMENTS

### Twin Falls County

- Three new retailers in the new North Canyon Project retail center are hiring as they prepare to open their stores. Old Navy, T.J. Maxx, and Michael's are hiring full- and part-time retail workers to staff the new stores. Magic Valley Job Service provided personnel assistance for a job fair held by T.J. Maxx at the West Coast Hotel in Twin Falls in early March. Michael's is interviewing applicants at the Magic Valley Job Service office. In total, the three retailers are expected to hire 200-300 workers, most of them part-time. It is expected that the stores will open sometime in April or May 2002.

- Illinois-based pharmacy corporation Walgreen Company has announced intentions to locate a new store in Twin Falls. If the deal proceeds as planned, Walgreen's will lease a building from Hawkins Companies, LLC, a Boise commercial development firm. The company plans to build a brick 14,490-square-foot Walgreen's pharmacy with a dual drive-through window on about 1.4 acres at the northeast corner of Blue Lakes Boulevard North and Heyburn Avenue East. It currently is the location of a Mr. Gas convenience store. If the plan proceeds and is approved by the city, the developer hoped to begin demolishing the convenience store and start pharmacy construction in mid-April with completion by September or October 2002. The new store will open 30-60 days later. Typically, Walgreen's hires five to eight workers to run a store of this size.
- Twin Falls School District Superintendent Dr. Terrell Donicht has been named Educator of the Year by the Idaho State University chapter of Kappa Delta Pi, an honor society in education. Donicht was honored because of the district's ability to consistently rank higher than the national average on standardized tests. Also, the district was one of four nationwide featured in a study as an example of a district that significantly increased student achievement while serving a high number of minority and/or economically disadvantaged students. This is the second major honor for Dr. Donicht this year. Earlier this year, he was named Idaho's 2002 Superintendent of the Year by the Idaho School Board Association.
- Filer Mutual Telephone Co. is moving to a new office building across from its present location on Main Street in Filer. In September 2001, Filer Mutual began constructing a new 10,000-square-foot office across from its old building that it has occupied since 1909. The new building will give the company room for new equipment to improve service. Filer Mutual is a nonprofit co-op owned by more than 3,000 members in a service area that extends north to the canyon rim and 35 miles south into Nevada.

#### **Jerome, Gooding, Lincoln, Camas, and Blaine Counties**

- Valley Co-op, Inc. has decided to sell its fertilizer division to Agrilience, LLC. Agrilience is an agronomy marketing joint venture owned by Land O'Lakes, Inc., CHS Cooperatives, and Farmland Industries with the head office in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The sale involves assets only; Valley Co-op will continue to process sales, and customers will still be eligible to receive patronage dividends. Valley Co-op, with locations in Shoshone and Jerome, did not sell the petroleum division, farm store, feed operations, convenience store, or propane operations.

Eight employees with Valley Co-op's agronomy business have accepted positions with Agrilience.

#### **Cassia And Minidoka Counties**

- Kmart Corporation announced that it will close two Kmart stores in Idaho—in Burley and Mountain Home—as part of its nationwide closure of 284 stores. Kmart will offer no transfers to any employees involved in the 284 store closings in 40 states, but employees are encouraged to apply for Kmart jobs elsewhere. The Burley Big Kmart employs a full- and part-time staff of 79. Staff from the Mini-Cassia Job Service met with Kmart managers and employees, and will be assisting displaced workers to provide unemployment insurance service and specialized assistance in job searches, interviewing, and resume skills. They will also conduct workshops specifically for Kmart employees to help them find future jobs. The store is expected to close sometime in May 2002 as soon as stock and inventory levels are depleted.
- Three co-located potato operations in Rupert—Magic Valley Foods, Rolland Jones Potatoes, and Silver Creek Produce—have suspended operations indefinitely in Rupert. This suspension has idled approximately 150 workers, and no specific date for a return to operations has been given. Magic Valley Foods produces dehydrated potato products; Rolland Jones handles fresh pack potatoes; Silver Creek Produce handles fresh pack vegetables. Silver Creek Produce has closed down and the company is looking at marketing options for Magic Valley Produce.

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